

THE OCCURRENCE OF BOTH RED-THROATED AND WHITE-FRONTED BEE-EATERS IN THE VIRUNGA PARK, EASTERN ZAIRE The two species *Merops bulcocki* and *M. bullockoides* (the Red-throated and the White-fronted Bee-eater, respectively), are sometimes considered to be conspecific (e.g., White 1965); however, Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1970) and Snow (1978) recognize both as good species on the basis of plumage, weight and vocal differences. The ranges of the two have not previously been recorded to overlap, therefore our observation is of interest.

On 19 June 1978, as we stood on the eastern bank of the Rwindi river in the Virunga Park, Zaire (00°46'S, 29°19'E), we were able to overlook a small patch of riparian forest and observe White-fronted Bee-eaters (brown crown, white forehead and chin noted) hawking insects from the topmost branches. This is a species with which in Zambia we are both familiar. After a few minutes we realized that at least one bird was different and was, in fact, a Red-throated Bee-eater (green crown and crimson chin and throat noted). We watched these birds for some ten minutes, during which time both species alighted on the same branch and the Red-throated Bee-eater was harassed and chased by a Scaly-throated Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus*.

The distribution map in Snow (1978) separates the two, at their closest point of contact, by some 240 km, the Red-throated ranging southwards to approximately 2°N, 31½°E and the White-fronted northwards to approximately ½°N, 29½°E. Our sighting was within this general area of supposedly no contact and extends the range of the Red-throated 370 km further south, overlapping that of the White-fronted by 130 km.

The Red-throated Bee-eater is not known to be migratory and whilst the bird we observed may merely have been a non-breeding wanderer, we believe it could indicate that the two species do co-exist regularly in the Virunga Park. There is no shortage of breeding habitat along the Rwindi and Rutshuru rivers, so it is an area worth investigating for a study of the relationship between the two closely allied species.

REFERENCES

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SPRING FALLS OF PALAEARCTIC PASSERINES AT MTITO ANDEI, KENYA The bushland of southeastern Kenya tends to contain remarkably few Palaearctic passage migrants during April, even when luxuriant after recent rain. In particular, such species as the Sprosser *Luscinia luscinia*, the Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* and the River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* are presumed to routinely overfly this area in spring, and in view of the lack of records, north-east Kenya also. These three species, together with many Whitethroats *Sylvia communis* and Sedge Warblers *A. schoenobaenus*, have only occasionally been revealed on northward migration in mist or heavy rain at the lights of Ngulia Lodge (Pearson 1980). Observations of many Palaearctic migrants at Mtito Andei after rainy moonless nights on 1 and 7 April 1981 are therefore of some interest.

A violent thunderstorm at Mtito Andei early on the night of 31 March/1 April was followed by about three hours of heavy rain. An overcast dawn with high cloud revealed scores of Sprossers, together with a few Whitethroats, Upcher's